



**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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## **Supervisors take Urgent Action to Address Health and Safety Hazards at Athens Stables**

The Los Angeles County Board of Supervisors took emergency measures Tuesday to address the serious public safety, health and environmental hazards at horse stalls located in the unincorporated community of Athens.

Acting on an urgency motion authored by Supervisor Mark Ridley-Thomas, the Board voted unanimously to bring back an urgency ordinance for consideration at the July 17, 2012 meeting that would prohibit any establishment or development of equestrian facilities within the surrounding community until design guidelines can be reviewed and recommended.

In addition, the Board requested routine updates from County Counsel on enforcement activities to address the 1.5-acre stable where a fire last month killed four animals. In addition to causing loss of life, the fire also exacerbated existing code violations, and conditions now are such that both the remaining horses and their owners are at risk.

“Public safety is my number one concern,” said Supervisor Ridley-Thomas. “It is abundantly clear that the owner of this site has not been sufficiently engaged in the upkeep of this property, and we cannot rely on him to step up to remedy what is patently a dangerous situation.”

Over the years the site, which is known by several names, including the Fig Stables and the Athens on the Hill Stables, have been the location of numerous fires, building and safety citations, animal cruelty cases, and criminal investigations. Some horse owners have been cited for the undernourishment and the serious medical conditions of their animals related to the unsanitary conditions in which they live.

Furthermore, although the Sheriff's Dept. of Arson Explosives Detail could not determine the cause of the June 18 fire, numerous code violations and fire hazards were found at the site, including illegal electricity taping and unsafe wiring; open flame cooking and barbecuing also has been observed at the stables.

The stables are divided into sections and are rented out to stable operators, who in turn rent out stalls to individual horse owners. The entire property, however, is owned by one absentee owner, and despite numerous citations from County departments, he has not made sufficient and sustainable progress toward remedying the numerous code violations.

"What we have here is a landlord who has allowed conditions to degenerate over the years," the Supervisor said. "But this community deserves better. There is a long tradition of horseback riding in this neighborhood and these horse owners deserve better than to be at the mercy of someone who apparently has done the minimum necessary to keep County code enforcement at bay."

The motion also calls for the development of a taskforce to study this issue. "The complex and numerous issues involved on this site call for a coordinated planning process – not an agency-by-agency review," the Supervisor said. "It is my goal that ultimately we can move forward with a plan that preserves both the legacy of equestrian activity in this community and at once promote the public safety and welfare of the residents of the Athens area."

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